Cas	Case 8:23-bk-10571-SC Doc 2493 Filed 09/16/25 Entered 09/16/25 17:29:14 Desc Main Document Page 1 of 20							
2 3 4 5 6	D. EDWARD HAYS, #162507 ehays@marshackhays.com AARON E. DE LEEST, #216832 adeleest@marshackhays.com CHAD V. HAES, #267221 chaes@marshackhays.com MARSHACK HAYS WOOD LLP 870 Roosevelt Irvine, California 92620 Telephone: (949) 333-7777 Facsimile: (949) 333-7778 Attorneys for Richard A. Marshack, Plaintiff and Trustee of the LPG Liquidation Trust							
9	UNITED STATES BANKRUPTCY COURT							
10	CENTRAL DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA – SANTA ANA DIVISION							
11	In re	Case No. 8:23-bk-10571-SC						
12	THE LITIGATION PRACTICE GROUP P.C.,	Chapter 11						
13	Debtor.	Adv. No.						
14	DICHADD A MADSHACK Trustee of the	COMPLAINT FOR:						
15	RICHARD A. MARSHACK, Trustee of the LPG Liquidation Trust,	(1) AVOIDANCE, RECOVERY, AND PRESERVATION OF PREFERENTIAL TRANSFERS [11 U.S.C. §§ 547, 550, AND 551];						
16	Plaintiff,							
17	v.	(2) AVOIDANCE, RECOVERY, AND						
18	HP IT SERVICES INCORPORATED, a	PRESERVATION OF ACTUAL FRAUDULENT TRANSFERS [11 U.S.C.						
19 20	California Corporation; and DOES 1 through 20, inclusive,	§§ 544, 548(a)(1)(A), 550, 551; CAL. CIV. CODE §§ 3439.04(a)(1) AND 3439.07];						
21	Defendants.	(3) AVOIDANCE, RECOVERY, AND PRESERVATION OF CONSTRUCTIVE						
22		FRAUDULENT TRANSFERS [11 U.S.C. §§ 544, 548(a)(1)(B); 550, 551; CAL. CIV.						
23		CODE §§ 3439.04(a)(2), 3439.05, AND 3439.07]; AND						
24		(4) DISALLOWANCE OF CLAIMS HELD						
25		BY DEFENDANTS [11 U.S.C. § 502(d)]						
26		[STATUS CONFERENCE TO BE SET BY COURT]						
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	4910-9091-9785,v.2 COMPLAINT							

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Richard A. Marshack, solely in his capacity as Trustee of the LPG Liquidation Trust, files this complaint against HP IT Services Incorporated, a California Corporation ("Defendant") and Does 1 through 20, inclusive, (collectively, "Doe Defendants"), and alleges as follows:

Statement of the Case

- 1. A bankruptcy trustee may avoid and recover actual and constructively fraudulent transfers made by a debtor. In this case, while insolvent, Debtor transferred at least \$57,196.97 to Defendant within four years prior to bankruptcy (collectively, the "Transfers"). The Trustee alleges that some or all of the Transfers were then subsequently transferred by Defendant to one or more of the Doe Defendants. Reasonably equivalent value was not provided the Debtor in exchange for the Transfers and, as evidenced below, the Transfers were made with actual intent to hinder, delay, or defraud Debtor's creditors. Alternatively, and to the extent the Court determines that Debtor was liable for any transfers made to Defendant during the ninety-day period prior to the Petition Date, Plaintiff alleges that such Transfers are avoidable under 11 U.S.C. § 547.
- 2. Under these facts, the Trustee can avoid the Transfers and recover from Defendant as the "initial" transferee of such transfers and/or from Doe Defendants as "subsequent" transferees who did not take in good faith, for value, and without knowledge of the avoidability of such transfers. Plaintiff seeks to avoid, recover, and preserve such fraudulent and preferential transfers for the benefit of the Estate.

Statement of Jurisdiction and Venue

- 3. The Court has jurisdiction over this adversary proceeding pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §§ 157 and 1334 in that this action arises in and relates to the bankruptcy case pending in the United States Bankruptcy Court for the Central District of California, Santa Ana Division, entitled *In re The Litigation Practice Group, P.C.*, Bankruptcy Case Number 8:23-bk-10571-SC.
- 4. Plaintiff has standing to bring this adversary proceeding pursuant to Provision V.E. of the Modified First Amended Joint Chapter 11 Plan of Liquidation, confirmed by the Court on September 9, 2024, as Dk. No. 1646. The Plan provides that the estate's litigation claims, including avoidance claims, were transferred to the LPG Liquidating Trust. Plaintiff brings these claims on behalf of the Trust.

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- 5. This adversary proceeding is a core proceeding under 28 U.S.C. § 157(b)(2)(A), (B), (E), (F), (H), and (O), and this Court has Constitutional authority to enter a final judgment on these claims. To the extent any claim for relief is determined not to be a non-core proceeding or a Sternclaim, Plaintiff consents to the entry of final judgment and orders by the Bankruptcy Court.
- 6. Venue properly lies in the Central District of California in that this adversary proceeding arises in or is related to a case under Title 11 of the United State Code as provided in 28 U.S.C. §§ 1408 and 1409.

Parties

- 7. The Litigation Practice Group P.C. (previously defined as "Debtor") is a corporation organized under the laws of the State of California, that had its principal place of business in Tustin, California. During all relevant times prior to bankruptcy, Daniel S. March ("Mr. March") was the Chief Executive Officer of Debtor.
- 8. On March 20, 2023 ("Petition Date"), the Debtor filed a voluntary petition under Chapter 11 of Title 11 of the United States Code, initiating bankruptcy Case No. 8:23-bk-10571-SC ("Bankruptcy Case") in the United States Bankruptcy Court for the Central District of California, Santa Ana Division.
- 9. Richard A. Marshack (previously defined as "Trustee" or "Plaintiff") was the dulyappointed, qualified, and acting Chapter 11 Trustee for the Debtor's bankruptcy estate ("Estate"). Pursuant to the confirmed Plan, the Trustee now serves as Trustee of the LPG Liquidation Trust, which now owns all of the litigation claims, including the Estate's avoidance actions.
- 10. Plaintiff alleges that, at all relevant times, Defendant was a domestic corporation formed and existing under the laws of the State of California. Defendant's address and/or principal place of business is 1506 W. Flower Drive, Fullerton, CA 92833.
- 11. Plaintiff is ignorant of the true names and capacities of the Doe Defendants and, therefore, sues said defendants under such fictitious names. Plaintiff will amend this Complaint to reflect the true names and capacities of such defendant(s) when they have been ascertained. Plaintiff is informed and believes, and based thereon alleges, that each of the fictitiously named individuals and/or entities are responsible in some manner for the occurrences alleged herein and proximately

caused Plaintiff's damages by their conduct. Plaintiff is informed and believes, and based thereon alleges, that the fictitiously named defendants may constitute individuals, unknown trusts, partnerships, related entities, owners, principals, shareholders, insiders, alter egos, co-conspirators, and aiders and abettors that: (a) received transfers from Debtor as an initial, immediate, or mediate transferee; (b) received transfers from Defendant as a mediate transferee; (c) directed or controlled Defendant's conduct and, as such, were responsible in some manner for the occurrences alleged herein; and/or (c) were used to shield Debtor's assets from collection, levy or execution, and to otherwise, hinder, delay and defraud the Debtor and its creditors.

General Allegations

A. The Bankruptcy Case

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- 12. Pre-petition, Debtor was a law firm that provided consumer debt resolution services to more than 50,000 clients nationwide.
 - Tony Diab ("Mr. Diab") owned, operated, dominated and controlled Debtor. 13.
- 14. On May 8, 2023, the Trustee accepted his appointment as the Chapter 11 Trustee in the Bankruptcy Case. To the extent that the Trustee was not appointed until after any of the events alleged in this Complaint, the allegations are based on information and belief. See Soo Park v. Thompson, 851 F.3d 910, 928 (9th Cir. 2017); Miller v. City of Los Angeles, 2014 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 198871, at *5 (C.D. Cal. Aug. 7, 2014); Mireskandari v. Daily Mail and General Trust PLC, 18 2013 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 194437, at *4 (C.D. Cal. July 31, 2013).

В. **Fraudulent Entities**

15. The consumers that retained Debtor to represent them would pay over a period of time via monthly ACH debits from their bank accounts. These monthly payments were intended to cover all legal services provided by Debtor to those consumers. These funds should have been deposited into an attorney-client IOLTA account until earned. Instead, these funds were never deposited into trust and were diverted to one or more sham entities created to receive and hold Debtor's property, other non-debtor entities, insiders, affiliates, marketing companies, coconspirators, or otherwise spent on non-business, unnecessary, and lavish personal expenses which ultimately rendered the Debtor insolvent.

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- 16. Mr. Diab has admitted, under penalty of perjury, that he operated the Debtor as a criminal enterprise, specifically, a Ponzi scheme. The Debtor's insolvency led to Mr. Diab and the Debtor to improperly selling its stream of retainer payments, sometimes multiple times over, to "investors" in the scheme.
- 17. After the Debtor's scheme began to crumble, as all Ponzi schemes inevitably must, and the Debtor's creditors began to demand payment from the Debtor, the LPG Insiders concocted and enacted a plan to keep Debtor's interests in property outside the reach of creditors. Specifically, the LPG Insiders created one or more sham entities to hold Debtor's property.
- 18. These sham entities include but are not limited to Vulcan Consulting Group LLC, Coast Processing LLC dba LPG, Oakstone Law Group PC, Greyson Law Center PC, Maverick Management Group, LLC, and Prime Logix, LLC. Several of the sham entities purported to operate as debt relief law firms.
- 19. After the creation of these sham entities, many of Debtor's consumer clients were unlawfully "transferred" to one of the sham entities to receive legal services, which also led to related ACH receivables being improperly deposited into the accounts of such sham entities.
- 20. Other money that came into the sham entity accounts were also all related to the Debtor's client files. As Mr. Diab would obtain loans to or investments in LPG, such funds would also be deposited in these accounts. Such loans owed by, and investments in the Debtor, were paid from the funds held by the sham entities.
- 21. In sum, Mr. Diab used the bank accounts of the various sham entities to hold Debtor money derived from ACH pulls drawn from the accounts of Debtor's consumer clients and/or from investors who were told and who believed that they were investing in Debtor.
- 22. In the year prior to bankruptcy, the Debtor's Statements of Financial Affairs evidence that it received revenues totaling approximately \$155 million in monthly ACH payments from its consumer clients.
- 23. Under applicable state and federal laws, ACH pulls from a consumer's bank account can occur until the party initiating the payments obtains the consumer's express written consent.

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- 24. With respect to the ACH pulls, the consumer clients only consented to the Debtor initiating the payments from their accounts.
- 25. With respect to the ACH pulls, the funds were derived from Debtor's consumer clients that never consented to any law firm other than the Debtor representing them and from investors.

C. Ponzi Scheme

- 26. Mr. Diab's operation of the Debtor as a Ponzi scheme manifested itself in several ways involving the Debtor's stream of ACH receivables from its consumer clients and the funds loaned to and invested in Debtor by third party lenders and investors.
- 27. As noted above, Mr. Diab used the sham entities he controlled to keep millions of dollars of Debtor's money away from its creditors. The use of the sham entities also permitted him to operate, without oversight or detection, and to avoid payment disputes and complications.
- 28. Third parties that believed they were loaning money to the Debtor and/or investing in in the Debtor and its streams of receivables were paid from the funds paid by the Debtor's consumer clients so that they would be unaware of the Debtor's insolvency and to perpetuate the Ponzi scheme. Many of these "lenders" actually served as "investors," hoping for very high returns before "the music stopped."
- 29. The Debtor also paid certain outside attorneys for services rendered to old clients with the funds obtained from new clients, further perpetuating and facilitating the Ponzi scheme.
- 30. The Ponzi scheme also entailed the Debtor incurring debt and obligations that were virtually impossible to repay. Because the Debtor and its marketing affiliates received only incremental payments over time from Debtor's consumer clients, Debtor would sometimes purport to sell the future streams of payments made by its clients to raise additional cash. The same receivables were often-times bundled and sold multiple times over with no regard for the resulting repayment obligations incurred by the Debtor.

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- 31. The Debtor would also at times work with marketing affiliates who would get consumers that responded to advertisements to sign retainer agreements with the Debtor in exchange for a portion of the future payments.
- 32. The Debtor also obtained money from investors and merchant cash advance lenders at usurious rates and objectively unreasonable terms.
- 33. The Debtor knew it did not have the ability to repay its various creditors and, thus, the actions taken by the Debtor constituted a Ponzi scheme orchestrated for improper personal gain.
- 34. This Court has recognized that Debtor operated a Ponzi scheme by using funds provided by former investors to attract new investors hoping for very high returns. See Dk. No. 1545, fn. 5.
- 35. The Ponzi Scheme Presumption establishes a debtor's "intent to defraud future undertakers [investors] from the mere fact that a debtor was running a Ponzi scheme." Merrill v. Abbott (In re Independent Clearing House Co.), 77 B.R. 843, 860 (D. Utah 1987). "Knowledge to a substantial certainty constitutes intent in the eyes of the law, cf. Restatement (Second) of Torts § 8A (1963 & 1964), and a debtor's knowledge that future investors will not be paid is sufficient to establish his actual intent to defraud them." Id. A trustee in bankruptcy is not required to show that an operator of a Ponzi scheme was subjectively aware his Ponzi scheme was destined to fail. In re EPD Inv. Co., LLC, 114 F.4th at 1153 (9th Cir. 2024).
- 36. "[I]f all the debtor receives in return for a transfer is the use of the defendant's money to run a Ponzi scheme, there is nothing in the bankruptcy estate for creditors to share." In re Independent Clearing House Co. 77 B.R. at 859. In such a situation, the use of the defendant's money cannot objectively be called "reasonably equivalent value." Id. Therefore, "[t]he trustee can avoid the transfers if they were preferential or fraudulent. Transfers to investors in a Ponzi scheme are preferential and fraudulent. Therefore, they constitute 'property of the estate,' and the trustee can recover them." *Id.* at 853 n.17 (citations omitted).
- 37. Based on the Ponzi Scheme presumption, the Court can presume that the Debtor had the actual intent to defraud investors within the meaning of 11 U.S.C. § 548(a)(1). Since the transfers by Debtor to third parties, including Defendants, were made with the intent to further the Ponzi

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scheme, the Debtor did not receive an objectively reasonable equivalent value for such transfers, and the Trustee can avoid any such transfers because they were preferential and/or fraudulent.

D. **Prepetition Creditors and Lawsuits**

- 38. Debtor's Schedule E/F, filed on April 4, 2023, as Dk. No. 33, lists: (a) 11 unsecured creditors with priority unsecured claims totaling \$374,060.04; and (b) 58 nonpriority unsecured creditors with scheduled claims totaling \$141,439,158.05.
- The claims register in this Bankruptcy Case includes 2,554 proofs of claim, totaling 39. in excess of \$424 million of claims asserted against the Estate.
- 40. At least 14 UCC-1 statements were of record securing alleged debts of the Debtor as of the Petition Date. These statements either reflected secured liens against the Debtor's assets then owned or thereafter acquired or provided evidence of the assignment or sale of substantial portions of the Debtor's future income. They secured the repayment of the following claimed amounts that are currently known to Trustee and are allegedly owed by the Debtor: (a) \$2,374,004.82 owed to Fundura Capital Group as evidenced by Proof of Claim No. 335 purportedly secured by a UCC statement filed on or about May 19, 2021; (b) approximately \$15 million dollars owed to MNS 16 Funding, LLC as evidenced by Proof of Claim No. 1060 purportedly secured by a UCC statement filed on or about May 28, 2021; (c) approximately \$5,000,000 owed to Azzure Capital, LLC as evidenced by Proof of Claim No. 127 purportedly secured by a UCC statement filed on or about May 28, 2021; and (d) approximately \$1.5 million dollars owed to Diverse Capital, LLC purportedly secured by UCC statements filed on or about September 15, 2021, and December 1, 2021.
 - 41. Debtor's balance sheets for the 36 months ending December 31, 2021, show approximately \$17,900,000 in total assets at its highest point in November 2021. This amount is significantly less than the \$424 million of claims filed.
- 42. Debtor's Statement of Financial Affairs, filed on April 4, 2023, as Dk. No. 34, reflects 15 pending lawsuits against Debtor as of the Petition Date. The lawsuits date back to October 18, 2021 (Fundura v. The Litigation Practice Group P.C. et al., Supreme Court of New York Index No. 613192-2021) and are as recent as March 10, 2023 (Diverse Capital LLC v. The 28 Litigation Practice Group P.C. et al., Supreme Court of New York Index No. 135614-2023).

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44. Moreover, insolvency is presumed as a matter of law where, as in this Bankruptcy Case, the debtor operated a Ponzi scheme. See, e.g., Glob. Money Mgmt., L.P. v. McDonnold, 10 No. 06CV34, 2008 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 128733, at *15 (S.D. Cal. Feb. 27, 2008) (concluding that "if a Ponzi scheme is proven, then the debtor is proven insolvent from the time of its inception").

F. **Antecedent Debts**

- 45. Upon information and belief, Plaintiff alleges that some of the Transfers were made to pay for debt incurred prior to Transfers being made.
- 46. Upon information and belief, Plaintiff alleges that Defendant invoiced Debtor with 16 expectation of future payment, creating antecedent debts.

G. **The Subject Transfers**

- 47. During the four-year period prior to the Petition Date, Debtor transferred cash to Defendant and/or the Doe Defendants. The full extent of the Transfers will be proven at trial, but are in an amount not less than \$57,196.97 (previously defined as "Transfers") as set forth in the chart attached as Exhibit 1.
- 48. To the extent the Court determines that the \$18,461.56 in Transfers made during the ninety-day period prior to the Petition Date were made on account of antecedent debts owed by the Debtor, the Trustee alleges that such Transfers are avoidable under 11 U.S.C. § 547 (collectively, the "Preferential Transfers").
- 49. To the extent the Court determines that the \$38,735.41 in Transfers made during the four-year period prior to the Petition Date were made: (a) with actual intent to hinder, delay, or defraud Debtor's creditors; and/or (b) without Debtor receiving reasonably equivalent value in

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- 70. At the time each Fraudulent Transfer was made, Debtor was indebted to one or more creditors that held a claim against Debtor on the date of each Fraudulent Transfer and on the Petition Date.
- 71. Debtor had been sued or threatened with suit before some or all of the Fraudulent Transfers occurred.
- 72. Debtor incurred substantial debt shortly before or shortly after some or all of the Fraudulent Transfers occurred.
- 73. The LPG Insiders caused Debtor to abscond and delay the discovery of substantial assets of the Debtor pursuant to the diversion of Debtor's funds, client files, and assets to sham entities.
- 74. Debtor actively concealed its beneficial interest in the Fraudulent Transfers and made the payments to Defendants with actual intent to hinder, delay, or defraud other creditors of the Debtor.
- 75. The LPG Insiders and the various sham entities, which held Debtor's funds, benefitted in part from the use of such funds improperly diverted away from Debtor and would be considered insiders under Cal. Civ. Code § 3439.04(b)(1).
- 76. Debtor received less than reasonably equivalent value in exchange for the Transfers. Defendant and/or Doe Defendants received at least \$57,196.97 of property belonging to Debtor.
- 77. The Fraudulent Transfers were made at a time when Debtor was insolvent and/or rendered insolvent by virtue of said transfers.
- 78. Plaintiff alleges that Defendant and/or Doe Defendants did not receive the Fraudulent Transfers in good faith, for value, and without knowledge of their avoidability.
- 79. Based on the foregoing, Plaintiff may avoid the Fraudulent Transfers pursuant to 11 U.S.C. § 544 and California Civil Code § 3439.04(a)(1).
- 80. Based on the foregoing, Plaintiff may recover and preserve the Fraudulent Transfers from Defendant and/or Doe Defendants as the initial transferee or, alternatively, as the subsequent transferee for the benefit of the Estate pursuant to 11 U.S.C. §§ 550 and 551, and Cal. Civ. Code § 3439.07.

28 follows:

28 11 U.S.C. § 550(d);

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Exhibit "1"

In re: The Litigation Practice Group PC Disbursement Details by Payee 4 Years Pre-Petition (03/20/2019 - 03/20/2023) HP IT Services Inc



Bank Name	Account Name	Account Number State	ment Date	Transaction Date	Check Number	Debit/Charge	Memo
Paychex	Litigation Practice Group	n/a	1/31/2022	1/31/2022		38,307.77	Form 1099
Chase	The Litigation Practice Group PC	3158	3/31/2022	3/11/2022	11062	427.64	Expense Report 130097 - Office Equipment - Brian
Paychex	Litigation Practice Group	n/a	12/31/2022	12/31/2022		4,615.39	Form 1099
Paychex	Litigation Practice Group	n/a	1/31/2023	1/31/2023		13,846.17	Form 1099
						57,196.97	